

1.4 The Great West

1860-1900

Transforming the West

How did railroads, ranching, mining, and homesteading affect the settlement of the West?

What hardships or conflicts did different groups of people encounter as they settled west?

Railroads



Transcontinental Railroad Promontory Point, Utah 1869

Built mostly by Chinese & Irish
immigrant labor

Moved products & people across
the nation at a faster rate

Increased industrial development
of steel & fuel

Towns & cities grow

Increased desire for land
belonging to American Indians
and Mexican Americans

Mining



Miners flock West after discovery of gold in California & the **Comstock Lode** (silver) in Nevada.

Wild West - disputes, bandits, and desperadoes lead to the formation of posses, sheriffs, and local governments.

Boomtowns are rapidly established when metals are found, then abandoned soon afterward.

Big mining companies begin to dominate due to the large sums of money and equipment needed to mine underground.

Ranchers



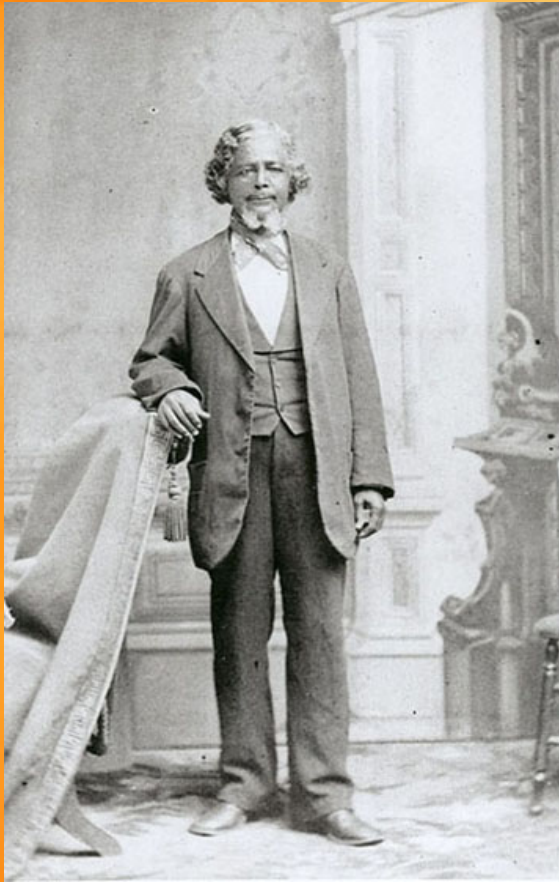
Cattle drives, cow towns,
cowboys & rodeos develop.

Demand for meat increases as
cities grow in the Northeast.

Refrigerated railroad car allows
meat to be processed in the
Midwest (Chicago) and
shipped to consumers.

As more fencing is put up across
the West, the Spanish **open-
range** system of cattle driving
dies out.

Farmers



Benjamin Singleton
of the “Exodusters”

Immigrants were recruited to start farms out West.

Homestead Act of 1860 gave 160 acres to individual farmers if they stayed on the land for 5 years.

Southern blacks found new opportunities out West. Some even joined the U.S. Army as **Buffalo Soldiers** to combat American Indian resistance out west.

Tough conditions: hot summers, cold winters, **sod houses**, few trees, wind-swept plains

Improved technology: **barbed wire**, **windmill**, irrigation, more scientific farming methods and commercial agriculture.

Competition and Conflict



Economic Rivalries

- Cattle ruined farmers' crops
- Farmers' sheep gnawed grass too close for cattle to eat
- Mining companies polluted the water
- Water usage was unregulated
- Fencing began to close off open lands

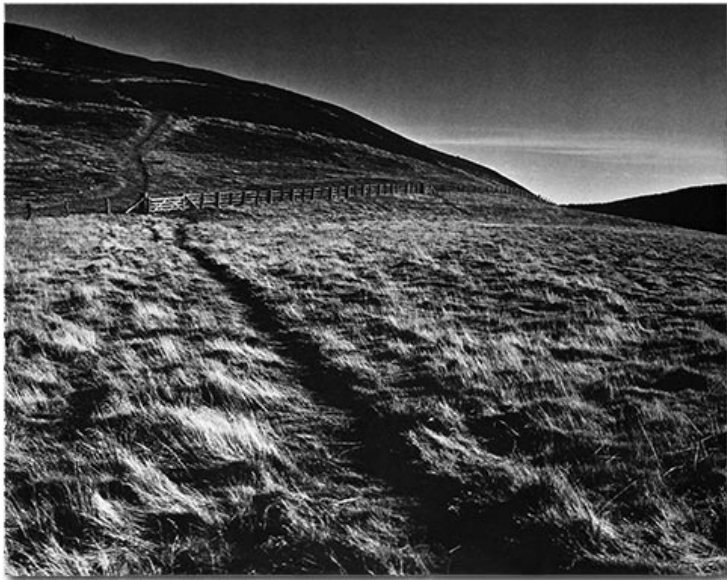
Competition and Conflict



Ethnic Tensions

- Different languages, food, religions & cultures clash
- Fear & distrust of differences
- Discrimination & segregation
 - Asian, Catholic, African American, Jewish
- Different cultural beliefs of resources - public access or private ownership?
 - Example: Salt flats in El Paso, Texas - public or private?

Closing the Frontier



Oklahoma Territory

- Last major land rush, 1889

1890 Census - no more frontier line

Frederick Jackson Turner argued that we would have to expand overseas or pressure would build over resources.

Unresolved Issues

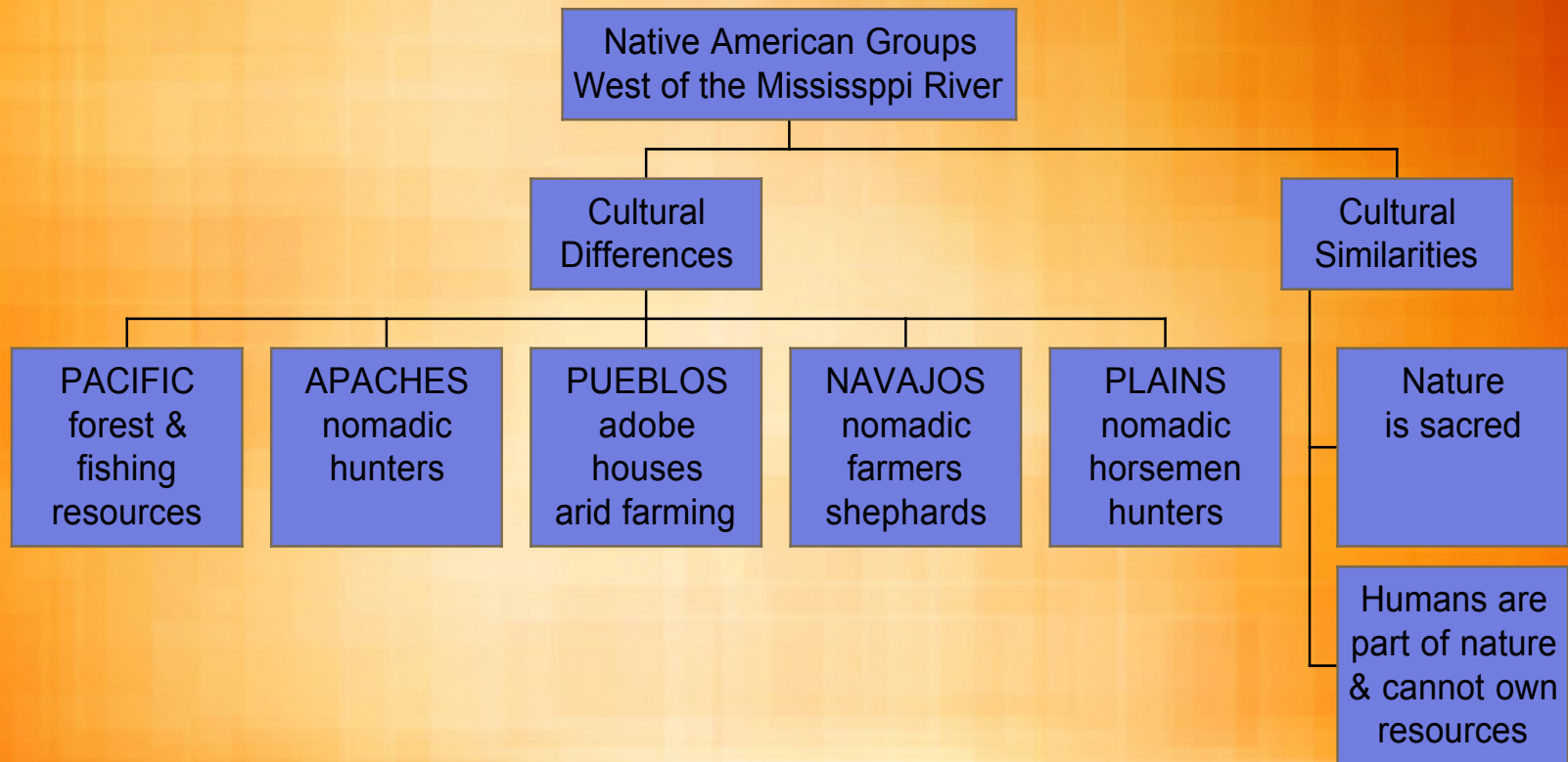
- American Indian land rights
- Clean water & environmental protection
- Immigration debate

Impact on American Indian Tribes

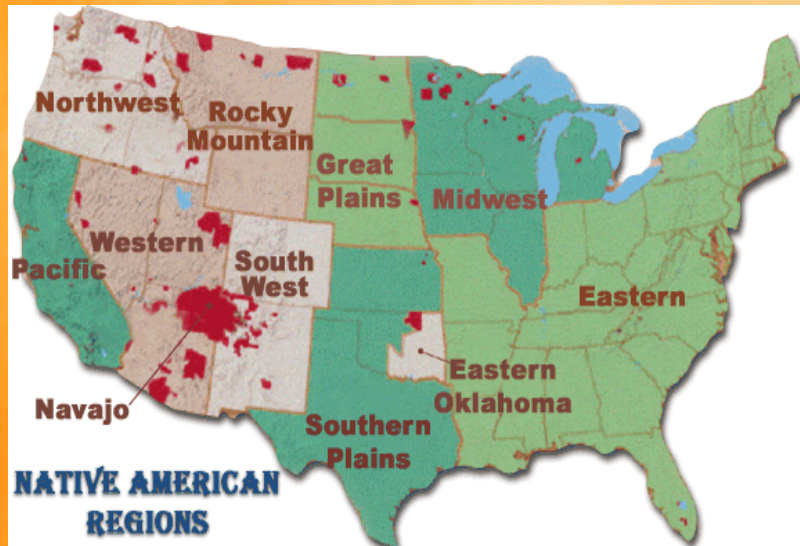
How did the interests of American Indians and settlers conflict?

What were the results of these conflicts?

Native Americans in the West



Advancing Settlers



Settlers go West

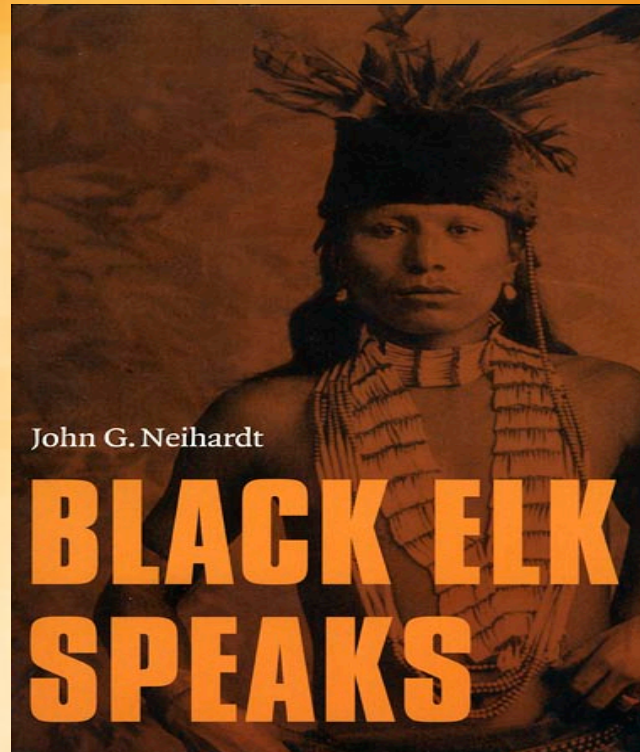
- Cultural belief: Land is a resource to own & produce wealth
- Gold & silver rushes bring hordes of people
- Railroad increases migration west
- “rain follows the plow”: Belief that God will send rain if white settlers farm the dry land

Impact on Native Americans

- Reservation life
- Poverty & disease
- Excessive hunting wipes out **buffalo** population



Link to Literature



“And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth - you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.”

End of the Plains Wars



1. Sandcreek Massacre

- US Army volunteers massacre scores of women and children in Colorado

2. Nez Perce

- **Chief Joseph** attempts to lead his people to Canada to escape reservation life; forced by US Army to return to Oklahoma
- “I will fight no more, forever.”

3. Battle of Little Big Horn

- Sioux warriors led by **Sitting Bull** resist rush of gold prospectors into the Black Hills. Custer’s army is annihilated.

4. Wounded Knee

- “**Ghost Dance**” prayers for restoring the days before white settlers
- In response, US Army massacres hundreds at Wounded Knee

Assimilation Policies



Boarding schools are set up to **assimilate** American Indian youth into white culture. Some children are even kidnapped and taken to the schools.

Dawes Act breaks up tribal governments. Congress grants plots of land to individual Indian families who give up tribal ways of life and **assimilate** into white culture.

Assimilation of Charles Eastman, Peter McLean

Helen Hunt Jackson



“It makes little difference where one opens the record of the history of the Indians; every page and every year has its dark stain.”

– *A Century of Dishonor*

Protests continue today...



Farmers and Populism

What difficulties did farmers face as businesses consolidated and grew more powerful?

How did farmers organize to try to change American politics?

Developments in Agriculture

Morrill Land Grant Act, 1862

- Gave large tracts of federal land to the states.
- States could sell the land and use money to establish agricultural colleges.
- Basis for public university system today

Farm production increases due to new machines and scientific innovations

- Machines decrease need for workers
- Number of farms and farmers decreases

Hard Times for Farmers

Increase in farm production **does not mean more prosperity** for farmers. **Why not?**

1. Prices for produce drop after Civil War
2. Cost of manufactured goods remains high
3. Railroads charging high freight rates to transport goods to markets
4. Grain elevators charging high fees for grain storage
5. Banks charging excessive interest rates for mortgages & loans; high foreclosure rate

Farmers Organize

“There are **three great crops** raised in Nebraska. One is the crop of **corn**, one a crop of **freight rates**, and one a crop of **interest**. One is produced by farmers who sweat and toil to farm the land. The other two are produced by men who sit in their offices and behind their bank counters and farm the farmers.”

-Farmers' Alliance, 1890

Farmers Push for Reform

The Grange - National association of farmers begins to get involved with politics to push for reform and regulation in state government.

- Fix (cap) maximum rates for grain storage
- Government regulation of railroad rates

Supreme Court

- ***Munn v. Illinois*** (1877): States can regulate grain storage because it is a vital public service
- ***Wabash v. Illinois*** (1886): States **cannot** regulate railroads because that is interstate (federal) jurisdiction

Grange pushes Congress to pass the **Interstate Commerce Act** (1887)

- Federal regulation of railroad rates

Populist Party Forms

The Grange organizes **cooperatives**.

- Farmers share the costs and profits together (not very successful, difficult to manage).

Regional groups organize into **Farmers' Alliances** & elect representatives.

These groups connect into the **Populist Party**.

Populist (“Omaha”) Platform

1. Unlimited coinage of silver (“free silver”)
2. Increase paper money in circulation
3. Graduated income tax
4. Government-run banks
5. Government-run railroads and telegraph
6. Direct election of senators
7. One term limit for president
8. Initiative, referendum, secret ballot reforms
9. Restrict immigration
10. Eight hour workday
11. End government subsidies to corporations

Economic Issues

TARIFF!

- Republicans: protect American industry :)
- Democrats & Populists: higher prices for consumers :(

National Money

- Republicans **Gold Standard**: using only gold will keep money valuable & limit inflation :)
 - Inflation is when a dollar is not worth as much as it was yesterday - bad for bankers who lend money :(
- Democrats **Bimetallism**: include silver in the economy to make money less valuable (inflation)
 - Farmers/workers get more cash for their crops/labor :)
 - Farmers/workers can pay off their debt easier if the \$100 they borrowed from the bank is now only worth \$80 :)

Gold Standard v. Bimetallism

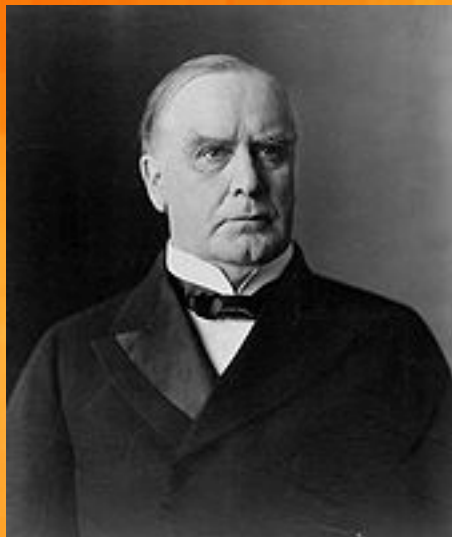
Central issue for the **1896 election**

- Should the government keep the **gold standard** or allow more coinage of silver (**free silver**)?
- William McKinley (Republican)
- William Jennings Bryan (Democrat)

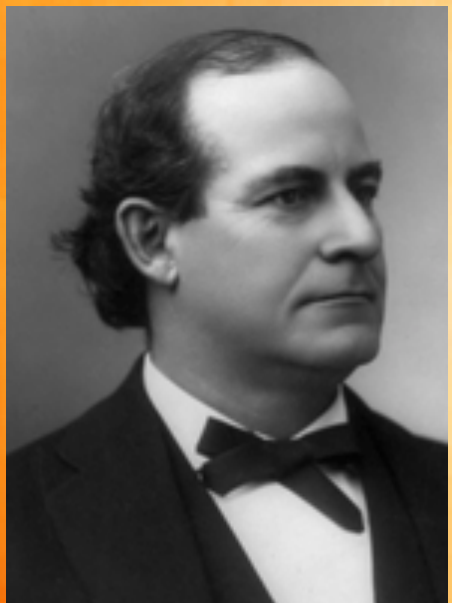
William Jennings Bryan gives his “**Cross of Gold**” speech on the campaign trail.

- Farmers & workers will not allow bankers to “crucify” them on a “cross made of gold”
 - (metaphor: Republican bankers worship gold so much they are willing to sacrifice the well-being of average Americans for it)

Election of 1896



William McKinley
Republican
Gold Standard
Pro-bankers
Pro-industry
Pro-North



William Jennings Bryan
Democrat
Bimetallism (Free Silver)
Pro-farmers & workers
Pro-West & South
Pro-regulation

Election of 1896

Populist Party does not want to split the vote between farmers (Populist) and workers (Democrat).

They decide not to enter a candidate and instead back Democrat **William Jennings Bryan**.

McKinley (Republican) wins the close election.

Populist Party fades from politics, but many of their **reforms** were eventually put into law by the Progressive Party much later.

Election of 1896

